

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, VE

SUBJECT: CARIBBEAN PRESIDENTS MEETING

1. CARACAS PRESS DECEMBER 17 AND 18 REPORTED PROSPECTIVE MEETING OF CHIEFS OF STATE OF CARIBBEAN GOVERNMENTS WITH VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ. ALTHOUGH THE DATE AND PLACE HAVE NOT BEEN FIRMLY ESTABLISHED, PRESS REPORTS STATED THAT THE MEETING IS LIKELY TO TAKE PLACE IN PORT OF SPAIN, BUT POSSIBLY IN CARACAS EARLY NEXT YEAR. PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING WILL BE THE GOVERNMENTS OF BARBADOS, GUYANA, HAITI, JAMICA, THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, AND VENEZUELA. GOV SPOKESMEN HAVE NOT REPEAT NOT MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY THAT CUBA MIGHT ATTEND.

2. VENEZUELAN FOREIGN MINISTER SCHACHT ARISTEGUIETA REPORTEDLY MET WITH THE AMBASSADORS OF THE PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS AT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VENEZUELAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ON DECEMBER 16. THIS MEETING WAS THE FIRST OF SEVERAL WORKING SESSIONS DESIGNED TO PREPARE A DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE CARIBBEAN SUMMIT MEETING, WHICH, ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT, WILL STUDY NEW MEASURES FOR MUTUAL AID AND ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL COOPERATION.

3. THE PRESS CONVEYS THE IMPRESSION THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ INITIATED THIS CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING AND THAT SCHACHT HAS TAKEN THE FIRST STEP IN BEGINNING THE FORMAL PREPARATIONS. "EL NACIONAL" ON DECEMBER 18, HOWEVER, NOTED THAT THE PRESIDENT OF GUYANA PROPOSED A MEETING OF CHIEFS OF STATE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES. ACCORDING TO THIS REPORT, THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES HAD ASSUMED THAT THEIR SUGGESTION HAD BEEN SCRAPPED WHEN PRESIDENT PEREZ MET RECENTLY ONLY WITH HEADS OF STATE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES, AND THUS THE AMBASSADORS WHO MET WITH SCHACHT ON DECEMBER 17 WERE SOMEWHAT SURPRISED BY THIS RENEWED GOV INTEREST.

4. DR. LEONARDO DIAZ GONZALEZ, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, INFORMED THE CHARGE ON DECEMBER 18 THAT THE MEETING WOULD BE ATTENDED ESSENTIALLY BY THE CARIBBEAN "ISLAND" COUNTRIES, PLUS GUYANA AND VENEZUELA. HE SAID THAT THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES (EXCEPT EL SALVADOR) AND COLOMBIA MIGHT NORMALLY HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO BE INCLUDED, BUT PRESIDENT PEREZ HAS ALREADY MET WITH THEIR PRESIDENTS RECENTLY. DIAZ DID NOT REPEAT NOT INCLUDE CUBA IN HIS LIST OF COUNTRIES TO BE INVITED. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO HAS TENTATIVELY OFFERED TO HOST THE MEETING IN PORT OF SPAIN, PROBABLY AFTER CARNIVAL.

5. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION DIAZ SAID THAT THE MEETING IS EXPECTED TO FOLLOW THE PATTERN OF THE RECENT MEETING WITH CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES WHICH STRESSED MUTUAL ECONOMIC INTERESTS. A COMPLICATING FACTOR, ACCORDING TO DIAZ, IS THE PARTICIPATION OF MOST OF THE COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN BRITISH COMMONWEALTH RELATED ACTIVITIES ALONG WITH SEVERAL TERRITORIES WHICH REMAIN UNDER BRITISH CONTROL.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH NOT SPECIFICALLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY DIAZ, THE RESUSCITATION OF THE IDEA OF A MEETING OF CARIBBEAN PRESIDENTS IS CLEARLY A VENEZUELAN INITIATIVE AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE PATTERN OF THE MEETING WITH CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS. THE GOV SEEMS TO BE IN THE LEAD AND MAY BE EXPECTED TO OFFER APPROPRIATE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND POLITICAL SUPPORT TO THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS. MILLS

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